
Motivational Interviewing and Vocational Rehabilitation: A Review With Recommendations for Administrators and Counselors

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Abstract -- *This article reviews research which supports the use of Motivational Interviewing (MI) as an evidence-based practice (EBP) within vocational rehabilitation (VR). A large body of data indicates that motivation is an important element in returning to work, and initial studies using MI in the employment field are encouraging. Vocational rehabilitation counseling shares foundational principles with MI, suggesting that MI may fit well within the VR context. This article contains application suggestions for both VR administrators and counselors. An illustration of how MI could be used in the VR field is provided, and unique challenges for the application of MI within the VR context are discussed.*

Keywords: *motivational interviewing, evidence-based practice, vocational rehabilitation, implementation.*

The purpose of this article is to review relevant research which supports the use of Motivational Interviewing (MI) as an evidence-based practice (EBP) within vocational rehabilitation (VR) services. The article also aims to provide practical guidance to VR administrators regarding implementation of MI and to provide VR counselors with initial guidance on how to use MI. The article is divided into four sections: (a) a literature review, (b) application for VR administrators, (c) application for VR counselors, and (d) discussion and recommendations.

Literature Review

The global financial crisis suggests that labor demand is likely to decrease over the next few years. The decrease in labor demand has negative implications for those with disabilities attempting to enter or reenter the job market (Waghorn, Chant, Lloyd, & Harris, 2009). The crisis is likely to increase the demand for VR services, putting additional pressure on public and private employment service systems to become more effective (Waghorn et al., 2009).

The positive outcomes from the use of EBP in other human service fields has drawn attention in VR (Chan, Travydas, Blalock, Strauser, & Atkins, 2009), and it has been suggested that efforts be undertaken to increase the

use of empirically-supported interventions and assessments in rehabilitation service settings (Chan, Miller, Pruett, Lee, & Chou, 2003). Critiques of current rehabilitation practice state that many of the interventions used presently are not empirically supported, but are primarily experience based, eminence based, or habit based (Law, 2002). Chan et al. (2009) even contended that "rehabilitation counseling must [begin to] embrace an evidence-based practice paradigm to remain a vital and respected member of the future community of professions in rehabilitation and mental health care" (p. 114).

Motivational Interviewing, listed on the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices as an EBP (2008), is included in over 200 published outcome studies (Wagner & Connors, 2010). Several recent meta-analyses of these studies, covering a variety of different behavior change areas, report an overall significant effect (Burke, Arkowitz, & Menchola, 2003; Hettema, Steele, & Miller, 2005; Lundahl, Tollefson, Gambles, Brownell, & Burke, 2010; Rubak, Sandboeck, Lauritzen, & Christensen, 2005). In three out of four studies, MI was significantly more effective than other approaches. In addition, MI performed better than traditional advice giving 80% of the time. When measuring even brief encounters of 15 minutes or less, 64% of the studies reviewed in the

meta-analyses showed long-term positive results from using MI. Based on the analysis of the above mentioned data, it may be concluded that MI outperforms traditional interventions in the treatment of a wide range of behavioral issues. These positive outcomes support the use of MI to enhance customer motivation within VR (Lloyd, Tse, Waghorn, & Hennessy, 2008).

Many of the behavioral changes that MI has been shown to address include behaviors that are often considered barriers to employment. These areas include, but are not limited to, substance use, engagement in mental health treatment, physical health and stamina, criminal history/anti-social behavior, and medication compliance. The wide number of life domains and populations where MI has shown positive results support the contention that implementing MI in the VR system could potentially produce positive outcomes for a broad population of customers.

Motivational Interviewing is an approach that was originally developed to help individuals with alcohol-related problems modify their drinking habits (Miller & Rose, 2009). Motivational Interviewing has since moved into the treatment of mentally ill consumers (Arkowitz, Westra, Miller, & Rollnick, 2007), as well as helping to improve a broad range of health behaviors (Brooks, 2005; Rollnick, Miller, & Butler, 2008; Scales & Miller, 2003).

A large volume of research indicates that motivation is a key element in returning to work (Finch, Nofziger, Panzano, Seffrin, Weaver, & Bunt, 2005; Panzano, Seffrin, Chaney-Jones, & Weaver, 2005; Roessler, 1989; Salmone, 1972; Tan, Cheatle, Mackin, Moberg, & Esterhai, 1997), especially for those with a disability (Aronoff & Feldman, 2000; Sbordone, 2001; Tan et al., 1997). Vocational rehabilitation counseling and MI also share many fundamental principles (See Table 1). Therefore, it is not surprising that many researchers have suggested that MI fits well within a vocational counseling context (Brooks, 2005; Graham, Jutla, Higginson, & Wells, 2008; Manthey, 2009; Miller, 2008; Muscat, 2005; Rollnick, 2007; Wagner & McMahon, 2004).

While there have been few studies to date which have directly tested whether MI in employment settings produces similar positive outcomes to those which it has delivered in other behavior change arenas, the studies which have been completed are encouraging. One study designed to help offenders obtain, maintain, and upgrade employment had 500 drug court clients take part in MI and enhanced strengths-based case management as components of an overarching vocational intervention. Participants reported an increase in self-confidence and described a change in how they viewed work and employers in general. Many realized they could defeat problems associated with their criminal record and job history, and they felt more capable of finding successful employment and pursuing academics (Leukefeld, McDonald, & Staton, 2003).

In a study conducted by Rose, Saunderson, Hensel, & Kroese (2005), 200 individual case files were analyzed from a supported employment agency. The study aimed to identify factors that might affect the likelihood that people with intellectual disabilities would obtain work through employment

services. Staff assessment of client motivation was the only predictor of employment outcome. Rose et al. suggested that incorporating motivational strategies, such as MI into the routine work of employment agencies, might increase the proportion of clients gaining work.

Currently MI is being paired with traditional supported employment models to create evidence-based supported employment services (Larson, 2008), a practice used within the mental health system to help those with severe mental illness obtain and maintain employment. Larson, Boyle, Barr, Glenn, & Kuwabara (2007) examined the impact of an Individual Placement and Support (IPS) program enhanced with MI on process and outcome variables. One hundred and twenty five individuals completed employment process and outcome measurements at baseline and six-month follow up. Program participants significantly increased the number of jobs obtained, hours worked per week, hourly wage, and monthly job income.

In New Mexico, The Magdalena Pilot Project was aimed at using MI to reduce drug use and HIV risk behaviors among sex workers using illicit drugs. The results indicated a reduction in sex work and drug use and an increase in days of lawful employment (Yahne, Miller, Irvin-Vitela, & Tonigan, 2002).

In Canada, MI has been touted as offering a systematic means for employment counselors to provide assistance to "fringe" clients (e.g., the poor, those with mental health issues, mandated clients, single parents, youth, and street workers) (Muscat, 2005). One unpublished study combined the Stages of Change Model and MI into a program intervention for Canadian employment services (Proactive, 2010). Based on extrapolation from the results, it was predicted that using Stages of Change and MI based interventions with all program participants would result in a 25% reduction in drop out rates, a 34% increase in first time employment numbers, and a 48% increase in six-month employment retention.

Graham, Jutla, Higginson, and Wells (2008) suggested that the techniques within MI add value to employment assessments, and Lloyd, Tse, Waghorn, and Hennessy (2008) reported that MI seems particularly appropriate for clarifying customers' vocational goals. Wagner & McMahon (2004) reported that the "use of MI strategies may be helpful for not only counseling and guidance sessions, but also vocational evaluations, case management, and job training" (p. 159). Motivational Interviewing has also been reported to potentially increase engagement (Fraser, Vandergrout, Thomas & Wagner, 2004; Wagner & McMahon, 2004), reduce defensiveness, promote disclosure, facilitate participation (Wagner & McMahon, 2004), and increase confidence in vocational outcomes (Fraser et al., 2004; Wagner & McMahon, 2004). Finally, Drebing et al. (2004) indicated that MI could be used as an intervention to boost customer self-efficacy, thereby increasing customer confidence and readiness for work.

Table 1

Similarities between Motivational Interviewing and Vocational Rehabilitation

Vocational Rehabilitation	Motivational Interviewing
Developed in context of modern brief interventions	Developed in context of modern brief interventions
Based on client-centered counseling approaches	Based on client-centered counseling approaches
Customers can reject VR services	Individuals can choose not to change
A focus on employment goal exploration	A focus on goals and values Exploration
Supports self-determination	Supports self-determination
A focus on work readiness	A focus on readiness for change
A focus on increasing confidence in work ability	A focus on increasing confidence for change and supporting self-efficacy
Work often with resistant or mandated customers	Provides skills to roll with and decrease resistance
Counseling often involves finding inconsistencies between employment goals and current behavior	Provides skills to develop discrepancy and amplify/resolve Ambivalence
Often counselors are asked to help reduce a broad range of behavioral barriers to employment	Has been shown to be effective in facilitating change for a broad range of behaviors
Informed choice is emphasized	Emphasis on providing a menu of options and empowering personal choice.

Customer ambivalence regarding the perceived costs and benefits of obtaining work may be an important factor in gaining employment (Wagner & McMahon, 2004). For instance, ambivalence may occur due to a variety of reasons such as an addiction, age, single parenthood, or a sexual offense (Amundson & Borgen, 2000; Hershenson, 2001; Schaefer, Friedlander, Blustein, & Maurina, 2004). In one study, unemployed individuals reported 47 specific costs and benefits when describing their ambivalence about employment (Larson et al., 2007). For instance, ambivalence around even seemingly insignificant topics such as hairstyle, manner of dress, and visible body piercings, may be enough to interfere with employment outcomes (Wagner & McMahon, 2004). Motivational Interviewing may be helpful to employment professionals not only in increasing the professional's ability to address customer ambivalence surrounding employment in general

(Larson, 2008; Graham et al., 2008), but also in addressing the seemingly less significant barriers to employment (Wagner & McMahon, 2004). The VR counselor can help resolve these situations by focusing on the customer's wants, expectations, beliefs, fears, and hopes, with an emphasis on the inconsistencies between them (Brooks, 2005). Within MI this principle is termed *developing discrepancy* (Miller & Rollnick, 2002).

Miller (2006) suggested that organizations can potentially experience a climate shift by encouraging the MI spirit, and that an MI oriented organizational climate may help with staff retention. Motivational Interviewing has also been recommended as a possible means for VR counselors to assess their own practice in order to potentially prevent burnout and avoid compassion fatigue (Parks, 2007).

Application for VR Administrators

Administrators who are considering the implementation of MI into VR systems need to be mindful about how their employees are trained. Evidence suggests that the typical one or two day workshop may not be the best venue for learning MI (Walters, Matson, Baer, & Ziedonis, 2005), that MI skills are not retained without added supervision (Heaven, Clegg, & Maguire, 2006), and that those being trained in one or two day workshops often self-report higher retention rates of MI skill than what has actually been retained (Miller & Mount, 2001). Other findings indicate that there is no significant improvement in MI skill level for those who participate in self-directed learning (Miller, Yahne, Moyers, Martinez, & Purritano, 2004).

Studies have shown that supervision in the form of feedback and coaching after initial training is a more effective form of learning MI (Bennett et al., 2007; Miller et al., 2004; Miller, Sorensen, Selzer, & Brigham, 2006) and have found that it is important to include ongoing supervision and support through continued practice for high level skill acquisition to occur (Madson, Loignon, & Lance, 2009; Mitcheson, Bhavsar, & McCambridge, 2009). One study found that training even less clinically savvy populations (such as front line staff who don't have a social science degree) in MI is possible (Moyers, Manuel, Wilson, Hendrickson, Talcott, & Durand, 2008), although not to the same extent as those who have a more extensive clinical background (Miller et al., 2004).

Creating feedback loops and allowing adaptations of an implementation plan are important aspects of ensuring effective integration (Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005). Therefore, administrators may need to adjust their implementation plan based on the experiences of those participating.

Administrators who are considering implementing MI in their systems may want to answer the following questions:

- What level of skill acquisition is desired?
- How will feedback and coaching be provided?

Table 2

*Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation:
Motivational Interviewing Implementation Model*

Activity:	Purpose:
A. Two-day basic training.	To gain familiarity with the approach and begin initial skills development
B. Two (2) one-day follow-up trainings at one month intervals.	To further skill acquisition and allow feedback from attempts to utilize MI in the field.
C. MI integration team meetings (Moved to quarterly in Phase 2).	To allow early adopters to meet and discuss the progress and obstacles to actual system-wide change.
D. A reoffering of A and B.	To ensure all employees across the state an opportunity to be trained.
E. Audio-taping and coding of VR sessions with feedback.	To ensure skill acquisition and provide follow-along supervision and coaching.
F. Advanced monthly training for those who had completed A & B and involved in E.	To initiate advanced skill acquisition and long-term retention of skills by providing training adapted to participant request and by trends in audiotape data.
G. A train-the-trainer process.	To develop internal agency trainers. VR staff (that achieved MI competency demonstrated by audiotape) trained as trainers and co-trained the re-offered A and B series.
H. A supervisor training series.	To enable supervisors to obtain MI proficiency and ability to provide supervision from an MI perspective.
I. The infusion of MI curriculum into established VR academies for new hires.	To ensure new employees gain exposure to MI from the beginning of their VR tenure.
J. The development of an MI toolkit and desk reference guide.	To enable staff to refresh their memory of concepts between trainings.

- How will facilitation of ongoing supervision and practice be conducted?
- Are there structures in place that conflict with the spirit of MI?

- How will a feedback loop be initiated in order to adjust the plan if needed?

Answering these or similar questions will hopefully assist administrators in developing an implementation model. For example, by keeping these questions in mind, the Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation decided to implement MI at all levels of its system. The agency trained not only front line staff, but also state administrators, regional managers, area supervisors, benefits planners, VR counselors, and rehabilitation technicians. A shortened version of their implementation plan is included in Table 2 as an example.

The first phase of implementation was targeted to introduce agency staff to MI through a series of training on MI skills and strategies. Participants attended a two-day basic training with two one-day follow-up trainings at one month intervals. This approach allowed participants to learn basic MI concepts, practice the skills, and bring actual obstacles and challenges to using MI in their work setting back to subsequent trainings. The one month follow-up trainings increased the participants' accountability for practicing MI as they knew that they would be reporting successes and challenges.

In order to create a feedback loop, monthly *MI Integration* meetings were initiated. During the monthly MI integration meetings, the MI consultants/trainers met with agency administrators, VR counselors, and rehabilitation technicians to discuss the progress and obstacles to actual system-wide change. Critical elements meant to address barriers to implementation which surfaced during these meetings included the need for (a) clear direction from agency administrators on their values, expectations, and support regarding MI; (b) ongoing training and supervision to ensure staff demonstrated MI competence per fidelity measures; (c) consultation and support for integration into relevant daily local office activities, such as unit meetings and case staffing; and (d) a separate and distinct training track for managers and supervisors to learn and apply MI in their unique roles.

Each of the suggestions developed in the MI integration meeting were subsequently introduced as part of the MI training process. For instance, an advanced monthly training was developed for staff which had completed the initial MI training series. The advanced training required submitting audio tapes of sessions with VR customers. These tapes were coded for MI competency using the Motivational Interviewing Treatment Integrity (MITI) scale 3.0 (Moyers, Martin, Manuel, Miller & Ernst, 2007). These advanced monthly trainings were tailored to include topics and skill building exercises based on the requests of participants and trends in the MITI data. In addition to the advanced monthly training, a training series was developed for managers and supervisors. The supervisor training series allowed supervisors to learn and apply MI to their unique roles, and the training series provided supervisors with the skills needed to adequately supervise staff who had developed skill in using MI.

Several additional steps were taken in order to ensure continued integration of MI within the agency. These steps included (a) a train-the-trainer process where interested and MI competent VR staff were trained on the MI curriculum and then co-trained a reoffered MI training series in tandem with the MI consultants/trainers, (b) the infusion of MI curriculum into established VR counselor and rehabilitation technician training academies for new employees, and (c) the development of an MI toolkit with resources and a desk reference guide.

The MI consultant/trainers traveled to many separate agency office sites across the state in order to accommodate as many attendees as possible. It took approximately two years to accomplish the tasks described in this article. Plans were developed to continue the feedback loop and training activities in order to ensure continued successful implementation.

Application for VR Counselors

Vocational rehabilitation counselors are faced with a wide variety of situations and contexts within which they are expected to function. It is important for VR counselors to utilize MI to help address behavior changes related to employment and avoid becoming a customer's therapist (Lloyd, 2008; Scales, 2008). Motivational Interviewing is not a therapy (although it is sometimes used as such); rather, it is a way of being with people (Miller & Rollnick, 2002).

On the surface, MI sometimes appears intuitive. Nevertheless, a depth and breadth of understanding is needed in order to apply it effectively in daily practice. Vocational rehabilitation counselors are often successful because they already have considerable natural ability and a desire to help people. Motivational interviewing builds upon these skills. As VR counselors increase fidelity to MI, they take the skills they already possess and build on them, tweak them, or weave them together in different ways to create an evidence-based recipe that can facilitate better outcomes. Examples of this type of skill building include using a specific type of empathy to reduce resistance or using precise types of reflections strategically to get at different results.

Miller and Rollnick (2002) defined MI as a client-centered, directive method for enhancing intrinsic motivation for change by exploring and resolving ambivalence. Motivational Interviewing is the strategic use of fundamental skills to reduce resistance and work with the underlying ambivalence that is common in making behavior changes. The *spirit* of MI is achieved by intentionally focusing on a collaborative partnership with the customer, evoking the customer's own ideas and solutions regarding his or her change, and openly supporting the customer's autonomy and choice (Moyers, Martin, Manuel, Miller, & Ernst, 2007).

The fundamental principles of MI are as follows: (a) rolling with resistance rather than confronting it, (b) expressing empathy for customers' experiences, (c) developing discrepancy between where customers find themselves

and where they would like to be, and (d) supporting a customer's self-efficacy (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). These fundamental principles are supported through the purposeful and skillful use of *micro skills* such as open-ended questions, affirmations, reflections, and summary statements (Miller & Rollnick, 2002).

Motivational Interviewing is client-centered, and the customer is considered the expert on his or her life. However, MI differs from other client-centered approaches in that MI is directive and strategic in how it uses micro skills. Motivational Interviewing intentionally uses micro skills for recognizing, reinforcing, and strengthening *change talk*. Change talk is defined as a customer's desires, abilities, reasons, or needs for positive behavior change (Miller & Moyers, 2006). Vocational rehabilitation counselors also learn ways to help develop and consolidate commitment to change (Miller & Moyers, 2006). It is helpful to envision MI occurring within two phases: In Phase 1 the VR counselor helps build internal motivation for change, and in Phase 2 the VR counselor helps strengthen commitment and a change plan is negotiated (Miller & Rollnick, 2002).

Changing behavior is not a linear process, and readiness to change is a fluctuating result that is tied to the interpersonal communication between the customer and the VR counselor (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). The VR counselor, therefore, strategically maintains a nonjudgmental and nonconfrontational stance in order to reduce defensiveness and facilitate a safe place for the customer to consider change (Muscat, 2005). Within MI, VR counselors are careful about everything they speak because resistance is viewed as not being something inherent in the customer, but as something that can be evoked from the customer through external influences. Whenever resistance is present, the VR counselor drops back into an empathetic stance. When resistance is not present, the counselor attempts to develop discrepancy between the customer's current behavior and his or her long term goals, tries to evoke self-motivational statements (change talk), and tries to affirm a customer's autonomy. A primary assumption of MI is that ambivalence is normal. Motivation can be increased as the VR counselor focuses on the customer's ambivalence with the specific goal of eliciting language statements that support change and increase confidence.

Case Example

The appendix provides a slightly adapted transcript of an MI interaction with a real VR customer named Mark. Some transcript data has been omitted or substituted to protect confidentiality and other changes were made in order to make the transcript more concise. Brackets are used to describe the micro skill strategy of the VR counselor.

Mark obtained a part-time job at the boy's ranch mentioned in the transcript, and after about six months he

was performing so well that the ranch administrators asked him to move to a full-time position. In this scenario, reflections and open questions were purposefully used to elicit from Mark his internal reasons for getting a job, thereby increasing his internal motivation. It was particularly helpful to frame the discussion around finding a career vs. finding a job. Periodically, affirmations and reframing reflections were used to support self-efficacy. When Mark initially brought up the idea about becoming a radio station director, the VR counselor took Mark's ideas seriously. He also closely aligned with Mark's ultimate goal. By exploring Mark's goal, the counselor was able to help Mark discover aspects of the job that were transferrable to many situations (like the ranch). The questions and reflections helped broaden Mark's options and provided him with meaningful choice. Care was taken to listen for opportunities to reflect back change talk statements. This tactic increased Mark's internal motivation for change. When the topic of drug relapse was present, reflections were used to develop discrepancy between Mark's behavior and his goal of work. Doing this allowed the conversation to be non-confrontational while still emphasizing the importance of maintaining a recovery program. The counselor was able to affirm Mark's positive progress without getting bogged down in unnecessary conflict. Mark wrestled with ambivalence at several points in the discussion. Reflections were used to help Mark move beyond ambivalence and make decisions. Specific care was taken not to force Mark into a plan developed externally by the counselor. Rather, the plan and decisions were strategically elicited from within Mark.

Discussion and Recommendations

It is impossible to cover all aspects of how to do MI within an article format. In addition, VR counselors work with so many different types of situations and population groups that it is not viable to cover all aspects of the application of MI to these populations. Despite the difficulties in describing all possible scenarios, there are several unique application challenges to using MI within the VR context. These challenges were described by the first author in a newsletter for MI trainers (Manthey, 2009) that may be appropriate to review in a more detailed and formal fashion here.

Avoid Arguing for Change (Despite Timeframe Constraints)

Often VR counselors feel pressure to get customers into a plan for employment within a certain timeframe. This pressure sometimes leads to anxiety on the part of VR counselors and can lead to pushing customers into employment plans in order to meet the deadline. When this happens, the interactions between the customer and VR counselor can become confrontational. It is important to avoid arguing for change despite these deadlines. Motivational Interviewing has been successfully utilized within brief settings such as healthcare (Rollnick et al., 2008)

where practitioners often have a much more limited timeframe with people than counselors do in the VR system.

Arguing for change can lead VR counselors to assume an expert position in relation to the customer. This is a common challenge that many practitioners need to overcome when learning MI (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). Rollnick et al. (2008) recommended several behaviors practitioners can use to avoid the expert role: (a) avoid arguing for change when the customer is not ready; (b) do not assume VR counselors have to offer all the solutions for change; and finally (c) do not assume the customer ought to change, wants to change, or that employment is the prime motivator for change.

Vocational rehabilitation counselors should recognize that MI doesn't force people to gain employment. When using MI, customers can legitimately choose *not* to change. If this happens, it is important for VR counselors not to blame themselves...or feel like they have failed. If a counselor becomes attached to an outcome, it then becomes easier to start giving advice or trying to convince the customer that the outcome is needed. Therefore, it is more helpful for VR counselors to focus on developing their personal skill-set, rather than trying to control the result for each customer. As VR counselors become more proficient in using MI, there can be a sense of relief because the emphasis and responsibility for change is placed on the customer. This shift in responsibility is important as customers are ultimately in control of their own lives. When VR counselors stop wrestling their customers toward a specific outcome, their customers often become less resistant.

Avoid Information Overload and Advice Giving

The VR process can be a complicated one. There are often many assessments to complete, deadlines to meet, and rules to which to adhere. Vocational rehabilitation counselors may spend significant amounts of their time explaining the process and what can and can't happen. Frequently, the information being provided by the VR counselor can turn into advice giving. When using MI, advice is given only if permission is asked first. When the advice is absent, giving VR process information to customers can be beneficial and can occur in MI consistent ways.

The sheer amount of information shared can sometimes create a sense of disempowerment for the customer. In addition, when customers disagree with aspects of the VR process described by the VR counselor, the interaction can become confrontational. The concepts behind *elicit, provide, elicit* (EPE) have helped in these types of VR situations. The utilization of EPE can provide an aid for VR counselors in establishing understanding while potentially generating a greater menu of options. Using EPE can give the VR counselor a way to provide information and expand choice for customers without creating a power differential. EPE is described here:

Elicit: The VR counselor elicits from the customer to determine sought after information, such as the customer's main concern, information the customer already knows about the VR process, how they want to proceed, etc.

Provide: The VR counselor then responds with a reflection or summary and then adds relevant information (with permission). The information he or she provides can be in the form of a menu of options.

Elicit: The VR counselor then allows the customer to respond or directly asks about how the customer is responding to the information provided.

Using EPE has helped VR counselors with agenda setting, understanding what the customer already knows, what gaps in knowledge might exist, and avoiding behaviors like prescribing, directing, or advising. Gaining access to these details helps the VR counselor to cut down on providing unnecessary or redundant information.

When providing a menu of options, it is helpful to include choices that might be outside of the services of VR. Including alternative choices allows the conversation to include the legitimacy of leaving VR service, while making it clear that customers can always come back to VR if they decide to later. A menu of options also allows the customer to feel empowered to influence the VR process. A simple version of beginning this conversation might look like this:

VR Counselor: I have some information regarding the VR process that might be helpful; may I share this with you?

Customer: Yes, go ahead.

VR Counselor: Vocational rehabilitation has helped individuals in similar situations to the one you have described attend education programs in a variety of ways, depending on what your needs are, what gets approved, and how it relates to your ultimate employment. A lot of it depends on what you decide and what the system restraints are. Sometimes VR helps with tuition, books and other peripheral expenses of an education. Sometimes VR only helps with buying books and the individual funds the other expenses through other resources. Sometimes it isn't funding support that people really want; sometimes they just want career and employment counseling. And sometimes individuals find that VR isn't right for them because of specific VR program restraints and they decide to go through other routes like government grants or loans. There are lots of options. What are your thoughts about this?

Avoid the Goods/Services Wrestling Match

VR counselors occasionally describe how some customers will enter services just wanting VR to purchase them material goods, such as a computer or car, without any real intention to return to work. This perception by VR counselors can sometimes lead to an implied "prove it to me" culture where customers have to justify to the VR counselor why they should receive the resources they are seeking. Interactions can then become a wrestling match. The customer begins trying to justify why he or she deserves certain resources, and the VR counselor attempts to determine if purchasing the requested good/service will really lead to employment.

Motivational Interviewing has been described as the marriage between empathy and direction (Moyers, 2008). When VR counselors are empathetic, it does not mean that they lack direction or boundaries. Motivational Interviewing can be used to help individuals understand the realities of the VR system while still maintaining an empathetic stance. One of the many ways MI accomplishes this is by developing discrepancy. Competence in MI provides the VR counselor with skills to develop discrepancy between what it is the customer ultimately wants and what the VR system can realistically provide. When customers become clear about their ultimate goals and values, it is easier for them to see whether the VR system fits or conflicts with their plans.

When customers do not intend to find employment, development of discrepancy by the VR counselor increases the likelihood that these customers will choose to close their VR files. The customers may be unemployed and without the resources requested, but content with their decision because what they were ultimately looking for could not be found in the VR system. Customers can then leave VR empowered to attempt their goals in other venues.

If customers do intend to find employment, helping to clarify goals and values is still useful and is central to the MI process. Assisting customers in identifying what they ultimately want can create opportunities to mine for change talk, thereby increasing internal motivation and confidence. Clarifying goals and values can also make it easier to develop detailed and individualized employment plans.

Avoid Treating Assessments as the Only Reality

Often customers who go through the VR process are required to participate in extensive assessments. Once the assessment and recommendations are completed, there can be disagreement between the VR counselor and the customer regarding the accuracy of the results. Vocational rehabilitation counselors should try to avoid portraying the assessment results as the absolute truth about a person's work ability. Utilizing the assessments as a launching point for conversation, while at the same time avoiding justification of the results, reduces the negative emotional charge these assessments can sometimes produce. Framing the assessments as a launching point for conversation provides opportunities for the VR counselor to develop discrepancy

between the stated employment goals and the assessment results.

Concluding Thoughts

Motivational interviewing appears to be a good fit for VR services. MI is not meant to replace the skills and expertise of VR employees, nor is it intended to groom them into therapists or clinicians (Manthey, 2009). Rather, MI is intended as a strategy and additional skill set for VR employees to use as they work with customers to (a) reduce resistance; (b) help resolve ambivalence about obtaining employment; (c) resolve ambivalence about behavioral barriers to employment; and (d) develop clear, achievable, vocational goals.

Motivational Interviewing training that take place in VR agencies should take into consideration a systemic approach, rather than a one-time training. The push to implement EBP demands a new and pervasive change in the culture and practice of rehabilitation counseling (Chan et al., 2009). Motivational Interviewing is an EBP which can be helpful in shifting culture, improving VR staff skills, minimizing staff burnout, reducing customer resistance, resolving ambivalence about work, and increasing investment in planning. All of these outcomes can lead to a more efficient and effective VR system.

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Appendix

The following transcript is an adaptation of a motivational interview with Mark. Referral to VR occurred after Mark was released from a psychiatric hospital. Mark had additional prompting to enroll in VR from his mother. Mark was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and had a history of substance abuse.

VR Counselor: Hi Mark, thanks for coming in again, if it's okay with you, can you tell me a little bit more about why you decided to connect with DVR? [Affirmation and open question]

Mark: Just because she (his mother) wanted me to, eventually we knew it would be good for me to get a job and start working. You know, to get my life going better and away from the hospitalizations and get through all the rough times in my life so I could move forward.

VR Counselor: So getting a job would help you move past those troubles. [Reflection]

Mark: Yeah, it would help me feel more like myself again. I mean I was in the hospital and now I've been on the waiting list for a long time.

VR Counselor: and you've wanted a job for awhile. [Reflection]

Mark: Yeah and a job that I'd enjoy doing. It's easy to go to a fast food place and get hired but I wanted to get a job that wouldn't be awful! Because I've had those jobs before where I'd go and do work that just sucks. I usually would end up relapsing and it just never worked out so now I am trying to get a job that I like and will be enjoyable and stuff.

VR Counselor: So part of it is you weren't stable before and now you are feeling more stable after hospitalization, and part of it is you were working normal jobs and now you are looking for more of a career. [Reflection]

Mark: right, exactly!

VR Counselor: Good! You have more energy for something like that. [Affirmation]

Mark: Yeah!

VR Counselor: So what ideas have you thought about that would work for you? ...Like good work environments, good experiences you've had, what jobs you've been interested in? [Open question]

Mark: When I used to volunteer at the radio station doing promotion work. I just love music and getting into the radio station and starting from there and then working up 'til my dream job. You know like ultimately becoming a program director or music director, selecting the songs that are played on the air, I would be pretty good at that.

VR Counselor: So, the ultimate job for you is to be doing something with music like being involved with programming and you've actually had a job in that field before. [Reflection]

Mark: Yeah, it was sort of an internship. I wasn't getting paid for it but I was going around setting up booths and stands for businesses who'd pay for the station to come out and promote what they were selling. I was just getting in there and meeting people and networking and all that stuff.

VR Counselor: So what were some of the things that worked out really well for you in that whole job experience, or volunteer experience? [Open question]

Mark: I really liked going to places and the atmosphere. I always liked the backstage thing and getting tickets and handing tickets to your friends. I liked the perks of being in radio. I like being able to go to a show here, get tickets there, just be active all the time and go out and experience new things. Meeting people is fun, talking to people about music. It was all fun.

VR Counselor: So part of it is you have a calling to be involved in the music field and there's part of it that you get to help friends out and you get to interact with people and that's something you really like to do. [Reflection]

Mark: oh yeah, I love talking to people, yeah.

VR Counselor: Those are some great skills. What are other things you really liked about that volunteer position. [Affirmation and open question]

Mark: When I was a kid I always liked the idea of people that have backstage passes. It seems kind of funny now and it's hard to describe but I just loved the whole scene. Its action, its entertainment, it's fun listening to music, you're talking to people, and you're at different places all the time.

VR Counselor: You liked the excitement of it and there's a whole spectrum of things that you'd like to do...that you really enjoy about being involved in the music scene. [Reflection]

Mark: yeah the whole thing...the whole thing.

VR Counselor: This is great because you have so many ideas and so many options in such a really large field. Music is the area of entertainment that you really like and there is also public relations stuff, there's all sorts of things that would interest you. [Affirmation and reflection]

Mark: Yeah I could do lots of things.

VR Counselor: What were the things that weren't working as well in that volunteer position? What were some of the things that either made it a struggle for you or why it started to go downhill? [Open question]

Mark: Umm, having to go to stations where they play music you don't really like to hear, because you have to just sit there and listen to it. There's no escape. I would have kept doing it, but I just... I started kind of...you know the meds kind of quit working, so I just kind of started decompensating and the radio thing just went away cause I couldn't really keep up with it.

VR Counselor: So one of the things that happens when you are working, is you know that when you're working your recovery program and really staying on top of your medication you're more successful. [Reflection]

Mark: Oh yeah...I can pretty much do anything.

VR Counselor: So for you it's important to do that. [Reflection]

Mark: Yeah, oh yeah, that's number one. I'm definitely going to do that.

VR Counselor: What else about that job seemed to be a struggle? [Open question]

Mark: Nothing else really. It was pretty easy going, pretty good, never really a problem. Maybe sometimes cold weather but other than that I mean you just dress warm. Everything else was good. I liked it.

VR Counselor: And you felt good about yourself while you were involved in that and you could see yourself doing that for a career if that's something that paid the bills. [Reflection]

Mark: Yeah, Yeah

VR Counselor: So here you are, you're at DVR what would be most helpful to you? [Open question]

Mark: Well probably job placement and educational stuff.

VR Counselor: When you talk about education what do you mean? [Open question]

Mark: Like college. Well, help paying for school. That would be one thing. But job placement would probably be better if DVR could go into a company and help you get a job that'd be interesting for the person and that they'd enjoy. Instead of saying "well here's a list of 10 places" and it's loading stuff onto the back of a semi or something you know?

VR Counselor: You want to do something that has value. [Reflection]

Mark: Yeah and even if there was a volunteer job that was a fun enjoyable job that I liked.

VR Counselor: Is it okay if I share with you a little bit about the VR system? [Closed question]

Mark: Sure

VR Counselor: In DVR the ultimate goal is to help you go out and be successful for the rest of your life. That way you don't need to keep coming back to DVR. What do you think about that? [Giving information and open question]

Mark: Yeah well it all comes down to numbers you know. Like how much money would you make? Cause I could probably go to a hotel and be like a valet or something and to me that's more enjoyable then loading stuff into the back of a truck. I've never liked doing bad work that I don't enjoy. Working tough jobs like stresses me out and I end up smoking pot. Doing manual labor that I hate, it causes me stress. I think it has something to do with my bipolar or something because I've never been able to make it work.

VR Counselor: So, there are two things going on, there is something about manual labor that sets up triggers for you and on the flip side what you've talked about is you function really well when you have a lot of social interaction. [Double-sided reflection]

Mark: Yeah, like if you're getting paid to talk to people in the set up booths, I love that, but doing work that I hate causes me stress and pain and it's just awful.

VR Counselor: And it's almost like a trigger for relapse. [Reflection]

Mark: It's a trigger and it's bam, I'm gone I'm done. That's why I just don't do that anymore. I just won't do it.

VR Counselor: That's good, I mean that's fantastic, Mark, that you have figured that out. You know that's a trigger and you don't even set yourself up in that. It's great that you've figured that out. [Affirmation]

Mark: Yeah, oh yeah.

VR Counselor: So you've got the option to go into music that you talked about earlier and you have many other options. What other ideas do you have? [Reflection and open question]

Mark: A friend told me about the possibility of working at a boy's ranch and that idea seemed good.

VR Counselor: It seemed okay because of the same reasons you mentioned before about radio: you get to talk to people and help them out. [Reflection]

Mark: Yeah, I really do like talking to people and from what I have heard a lot of these kids are like I was. You know, have drug problems and mental stuff.

VR Counselor: You are successfully recovering from bipolar disorder and you believe that you can help other people do that too. [Reflection]

Mark: Oh yeah! It hit me when I was seventeen, you know. I was a running start student and a junior in high school. I was doing fine and then the bipolar hit and it just...you know...took over. I went to psych centers and then the drug addiction. I started self-medicating for the bipolar I guess. I had these problems but now it's like I am coming out of all of that. I am starting back over where I was before the bipolar hit me when I was seventeen.

VR Counselor: You feel like you are coming full circle and you're really ready to jump back into things like getting a job. [Reflection]

Mark: It's like I've come out of the hospital and I'm ready to go. It's like I went in and had surgery and now I'm better and I'm ready to go.

VR Counselor: Ready to jump back into life. [Reflection]

Mark: yeah

VR Counselor: So what is it in particular about being able to help other people that struck a chord with you? [Open question]

Mark: Well if I could get to help somebody, if I could just help one person out...and have them not have to do what I had to do...that would be worth it forever...

VR Counselor: You'd find a lot of value in that, internally. [Reflection]

Mark: Oh yeah, big time. I even have friends saying that I am kind of like an inspiration for them because of how I am doing better. They say "Wow I remember when Mark was like this, when we were hanging out with Mark doing that, and look at Mark now." So, that was nice to hear.

VR Counselor: So you feel like you are already helping people...so that wouldn't be a big jump for you to continue to try and help people in that area. [Reflection]

Mark: Yeah it'd just be great you know? It'd be really awesome...Yeah, cause I am not the one usually helping people, people are usually the ones helping me. It'd really be a flip.

VR Counselor: Reversing that would be really rewarding and you are really excited about the possibility of working at the boy's ranch or something similar. [Reflection]

Mark: Right now I definitely want to get the job at the boy's ranch. It would be fun helping kids out. I don't want to give up on the whole radio thing but it is hard, you know, to go into broadcasting school. This whole boys ranch thing might turn into like a great thing and I might just fall in love with it, and if I am helping kids out I might just want to stay there and just keep doing it. The radio thing I really love that too so it's...I don't really know what I am going to do actually with both those things.

VR Counselor: So you're kind of weighing those ideas out in your mind trying to figure out if you could do both. [Reflection]

Mark: Yeah, I think I am going to try for the ranch thing and work there and still do the radio thing...you know, still do that too. And if it doesn't work out at the ranch, I'll get another job like it, cause I need some money coming in. I want to do the radio thing but it's only volunteer right now, and I can't really get hired anywhere for that.

VR Counselor: So, right now, the boys ranch seems the most feasible because you could make money and possibly fall in love with the job at the same time and have it be a career choice. What other reasons do you have for getting a job? [Reflection]

Mark: It's nice when you're working, when you're doing something during the day and you're doing something productive and just...you're not sitting at home. You get to go out and do stuff you know that's...I mean I haven't been used to it...I haven't held a serious job since the bipolar hit me. So I just want to get back and the ranch would be even more of a bonus because it would be nice working with kids and helping them out, cause they've had some rough lives.

VR Counselor: Just to get out and do stuff would be a great thing! But to be out and working and helping people like at the boy's ranch that you enjoy is even better.

Mark: Yeah!